DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 380 380 SO 024 738

AUTHOR	Ruth, Amy, Ed.
TITLE	One Room Schools in Iowa.
INSTITUTION	Iowa State Historical Society, Iowa City.
REPORT NO	ISSN-0278-0208
PUB DATE	94
NOTE	33p.; "The Goldfinch" presents Iowa History for Young People.
AVAILABLE FROM	Goldfinch, State Historical Society of Iowa, 402 Iowa Avenue, Iowa City, IA 52240-1806 (subscription, 4 issues, $10).
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Serials (022) -- Guides - Classroom Use - Instructional Materials (For Learner) (051)
JOURNAL CIT	Goldfinch; v16 n1 p1-31 Fall 1994
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	American Indian Education; Amish; Black Students; *Classroom Environment; *Educational History; Elementary Education; Females; Learning Activities; Local History; Oral History; Rural Farm Residents; *Rural Schools; *School Buildings; *State History; Teacher Education; *Teaching Conditions
IDENTIFIERS	Native Americans

ABSTRACT

This issue focuses on one-room school houses in Iowa. At one time, almost 14,000 one-room schools dotted Iowa's rural landscape. Articles explore Native American schools of the past and present, segregation of black students, and Amish schools. An article remembering one-room schools describes the early schools from 1830 to 1858, township schools from 1858 to 1872, expanding communities and schools, and the compulsory education law passed in 1902 which required all children between the ages of 7 and 14 to attend school. An article on consolidating one-room schools describes changes in which Iowa went from having more one-room schools than any state in the nation to 1965 when the Iowa legislature passed a law ordering all schools to become part of legal school districts with high schools. By July 1, 1967, most of Iowa's one-room schools were closed. Another article discusses changes in transportation to and from schools for Iowa students. Pictures include children walking and riding ponies, and a horse-drawn hack used to transport students to consolidated schools until the 1940s. A series of photographs show pre-1920s Iowa students, teachers, and schools; questions to be answered by students after examining the pictures are included. This issue contains an article on the lives of teachers in the one-room schools, a crossword puzzle, a short story, biographical sketches of three people who made a difference in Iowa's country schools, a cartoon, and articles on playing and learning in the past. (DK)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

Goldfinch

Iowa History for Young People

Volume 16, Number 1 Fall 1994

ED 380 380

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

D. Gore

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

SO 024 738

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Wild Rosie's Map

At the turn of the century, almost 14,000 one-room schools dotted Iowa's rural landscape. Schoolchildren of all ages learned reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic in buildings that today are museums, storage sheds, homes, and even garages.

Come explore Iowa's exciting one-room school history in this issue of *The Goldfinch*. Be sure to consult Wild Rosie's Map (below) and the table of contents (next page) for a detailed travel plan.

Your explorations may lead to exciting new discoveries in your own community! The first five kids who send written histories of one-room schoolhouses in their communities will receive free, one-year subscriptions to *The Goldfinch*. Send your essays to: "Schoolhouse History," *The Goldfinch*, State Historical Society of Iowa, 402 Iowa Ave., Iowa City, IA 52240.

Some of the Places You'll Visit in This Issue of *The Goldfinch*

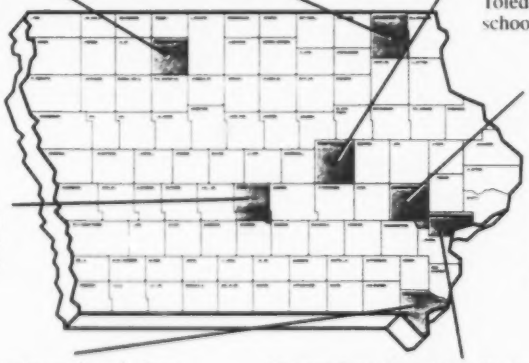
Palo Alto County — Nine-year-old Etta May Lacey went to school in her home in 1870 before a one-room schoolhouse was built in her community.

Winneshiek County — Orleans School #3 has twins in its history. Can you find them on the back cover?

Tama County — Mesquaki students once attended a Toledo boarding school.

Johnson County — Writer Marc Nieson lives in a one-room schoolhouse in rural Johnson County. He shared its history with *The Goldfinch*.

Polk County — A group of fifth and sixth-graders make history in an 1800s one-room schoolhouse.



Lee County — Iowa's first-known European-American school opened in Lee County in 1830.

Muscatine County — In the 1860s, twelve-year-old Susan Clark, an African American, fought for and won the right to attend a Muscatine public school.

Map design by Kris Atha, Oskaloosa

The Goldfinch

Volume 16, Number 1
Fall 1994

INTERIM EDITOR: Amy Ruth
PUBLICATIONS DIRECTOR: Christie Dailey
FICTION EDITOR: Steven Blaski
EDITORIAL ASSISTANT: Sherri Dagel
CONSULTING EDITORS: Guy W. Ghan, school administration, educational program consultant, Iowa Department of Education; Loren Horton, senior historian, State Historical Society of Iowa; Polly Kaufman, Ed.D., professor of history, University of Massachusetts; and David R. Reynolds, Ph.D., professor of geography, The University of Iowa.
EDUCATORS' ADVISORY BOARD: Betty Arndt, Greenwood Elementary School, Des Moines; Mardell Schaefer, CAL Community Elementary School, Latimer; and Linda Vandeventer, Harrison Elementary School, Davenport.
CHILDREN'S ADVISORY BOARD: Audrey Ann Coffield, Montezuma; Mathew Kendall and Jacob Knoll, Cedar Rapids; Amber Massa and Jill Pennington, Iowa City.

SPECIAL THANKS TO: Mary Bennett, special collections librarian, State Historical Society of Iowa; Jonathan Buffalo, Mesquakie tribal historian, Tama; Arnold Cooper, Ph.D., chairman, Department of Education, Lincoln University, Jefferson City, Mo.; Colleen Kemps, Cedar Rapids; Katie Neckerman, Marc Nieson, and Dorothy Ressler Iowa City; Dawn Perry Sass Sayre, Decorah; Leslie C. Swanson, Moline, Ill. The characters of Wild Rosie and Goldie by Jerry Brown.

CREDITS: The article on page 12 was adapted, in part, from the April 1981 *Goldfinch*, Vol. 2, No. 4.

COVER: Cover design by Kris Atha, Oskaloosa

The Goldfinch (ISSN 0278-0208) is published quarterly by the State Historical Society of Iowa, 402 Iowa Avenue, Iowa City, Iowa 52240-1806 (319/335-3916). Second-class postage paid at Iowa City, Iowa. Subscriptions are $10 for four issues.
Postmaster: Send address changes to: Carol Carey, subscriptions coordinator, *The Goldfinch*, State Historical Society of Iowa, 402 Iowa Avenue, Iowa City, Iowa 52240-1806.

© State Historical Society of Iowa, 1994
No portion of *The Goldfinch* may be reproduced without prior permission.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Check it out:

SHS

Before buses and cars, rural kids walked to school, books and dinner pail in hand. See story on page 14.

SHS

How did the Civil War change the face of teaching in Iowa? Turn to page 18 to find out.

SHS

Students received rewards of merit for good grades and behavior. Turn to page 8 for more one-room school traditions.

CONTENTS

Features

Wild Rosie's Map	**2**
Schools in the News	**4**
Flashback: Remembering One-Room Schools	**8**
Iowa's Lost Treasures	**12**
Getting There: Feet, Horses, Buses, and More	**14**
Peeking at Pictures	**16**
Getting to Know You: Country School Teachers	**18**
Schooldays Crossword	**20**
Goldfinch* Fiction: *A School Day to Remember	**21**
Who's Who?	**26**
Playing in the Past	**27**

Departments

History Makers	**28**
Answers	**30**
What Next?	**30**
The Roost	**31**
History Mystery	**Back Cover**

On the Cover:

Students at Jackson Township School #5 in Sac County posed for this class picture around 1907. Can you pick out teacher Susan Conklin in the back row? We think Elmer and Elvie Mastller (first row, last students to the right), are twins. What do you think? See page 17 for more about this photo.

NEWZ-

Iowa's One-room schoolhouses

You can still spot them every so often along gravel roads — lone buildings with tall windows. One-room schoolhouse buildings still stand today, but they're often boarded up or abandoned. There's one in rural Johnson County which I've recently been fortunate enough to call home. For forty-five years, however, it was called something

Union #9 LIVING HISTORY

else: Union #9, the ninth rural school in Union **Township**. Researching its history has been almost as fun as experiencing its surrounding landscape.

On January 8, 1912, the first day of classes, Union #9 welcomed four students. The kids came from two families, and were all under ten-years-old.

On that first cold morning of classes, teacher Anna Rohret probably arrived early to tend the wood stove and haul water for the washbasin before beginning lessons in spelling, numbers, and geography. Rohret's most-used tool was the blackboard, which stretched across one-and-a-half walls. Perhaps she had a few maps and a dictionary.

By 1956, the year the schoolhouse closed its doors for the last time, Union #9 had a few more students, a swing set, and a teeter-totter. Jim Walters, who was a third-grader in 1956, remembers his school fondly.

"I remember having a lot of self-study time, like reading or practicing penmanship," he told *The Goldfinch*. "But of course you're all in the same room, so you're paying attention to what's going on with the other kids, too."

"And we never had an [indoor] toilet!" he added. "The big kids all told us there were snakes in the **privies**."

Union #9's last teacher, Marcia Smalley, remembers the school had limitations, even in 1956. "In those days, each child had to buy their own textbooks, all their pencils, crayons, paste, and tablet paper," she told *The Goldfinch*. "We had a set of encyclopedias, but they weren't up-to-date." Smalley often borrowed library books from the county superintendent's office.

Union #9 might not have had its own library, but students received a lot of personal attention from the teacher and their school was close to home. And the best part? According to Jim Walters, it was always recess.

— *Marc Nieson*

Meet the Author

Marc Nieson has lived in Union #9 for two years and is writing a book about his experiences. His kitchen and bathroom were once cloakrooms for students' coats and dinner pails. He reads and writes at a table in the schoolroom where students once struggled through history, math, and spelling assignments. "I'm learning lessons of my own living in the schoolhouse," he told The Goldfinch.

township — small, organized area with local government

privy — outdoor toilet

boarding school — school where students live and study

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Native-American Schools: Yesterday & Today

European-American missionaries traveled to the territory of Iowa to teach Native Americans to be Christians and to read, write, and speak English. Missionaries taught Potawatomi, Winnebago, Chippewa, and Mesquakie in mission homes and churches. In the mid-1800s, they sometimes sent Native-American children to **boarding schools** in other parts of the country.

Most Native Americans did not want a European-American education. They knew all they needed to care for their families, grow crops, and hunt game.

In 1875, the United States Government opened a settlement school for the Mesquakie tribe in Tama County. The single schoolroom was housed in the two-story government administration building, and the teacher lived upstairs. Through an interpreter, students learned to read, write, and speak English.

The school, like most to come, did not progress as the government had hoped. The few students who did attend often missed school to go to tribal ceremonies. "Nobody was forced to go to school," Mesquakie tribal historian, Johnathan Buffalo, told *The Goldfinch*. "If the people went off to the winter camps, the whole family went and when they came back, they went back to school."

In 1896, an **industrial** school opened in the government building. Native American students only spent mornings inside studying. Afternoons were set aside for gardening, agriculture, and carpentry.

Not long after the industrial school opened, the government wanted more control over Mesquakie children. Without the support of tribal leaders, the government built a boarding school in nearby Toledo. Fifty Mesquakie students were enrolled when the Toledo Boarding School opened in 1898.

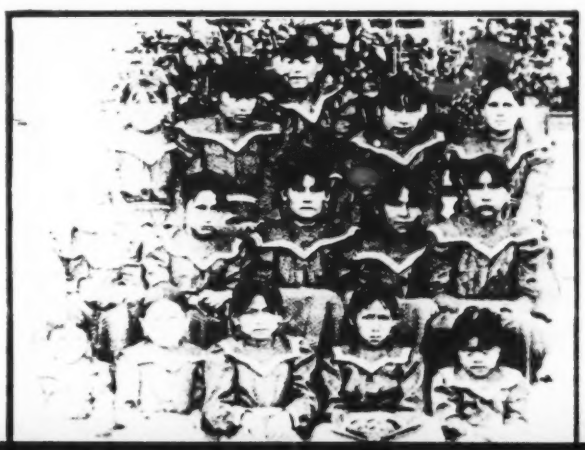
Although some students went home on weekends, the boarding school disrupted tribal life and took children away from their parents. The government could not legally force Mesquakie children to attend the school, but some government officials tried. Parents went to court to stop them. Because so few Mesquakie children attended the boarding school, Native-American children were brought in from across the country. The school closed in 1910.

After the boarding school closed, two day schools were built on the settlement. They joined in 1938 to form the Sac and Fox Day School, now known as the Sac and Fox Settlement School.

Today, Mesquakie education is in the hands of the tribe. Mesquakie students go to school close to home and are taught by those who understand tribal ways. When students reach the ninth grade, they leave the Sac and Fox Settlement School for Tama public high schools.

— Amy Ruth. with special thanks to Johnathan Buffalo

Native-American kids from around the country attended a Toledo boarding school between 1898 and 1910.



industrial — having to do with manual skill

The Galland School: *An Iowa First*

Iowa's first European-American students began their education in a one-room log cabin in the southeastern part of the state. In 1830 school buses were unheard of on the wild prairie, so most students walked to school. Some students canoed across the Mississippi River.

Isaac Galland, an Illinois doctor and lawyer who had established a settlement called National (now in Lee County), designed and built Iowa's first known European-American school in 1830.

Neighbors and friends helped Galland construct the tiny, 10-by-12-foot building from logs split by hand tools. Because nails and other building equipment were scarce, settlers used mud to hold the building together. Mud was also used to make a chimney and to fill in cracks to keep out the winter wind. Holes were cut in the logs for windows, and thin, oiled cloth covered the openings.

A log cabin served as Iowa's first-known schoolhouse. This drawing shows the Galland School as it looked in 1830.

Galland hired a twenty-three-year-old man named Berryman Jennings to teach the first term from October to December. Jennings moved to National from Illinois to instruct between six and eight students.

Jennings did not earn any money teaching. Instead, he received food, firewood, and furniture for his room in Doctor Galland's home. He was also allowed to read Galland's rare medical books. Jennings planned to become a doctor and needed the books to study medicine.

Learning was a challenge in the log building. Chilling winds whistled through the walls on cold days as students huddled over their lessons. Little light came in through the oil cloth windows on cloudy days. Students sat on two log benches and had to stand to reach the high, rough boards that served as desk tops. Books and paper were scarce.

Kids studied in the school until 1833 when settlers, including Jennings and Galland, moved away and closed the school. After the building was abandoned a family lived in it for a short time, and it was later cut up for firewood. In 1924, the Keokuk chapter of the **Daughters of the American Revolution** marked the school's original site with a boulder. A model of the original school was placed near Montrose in 1940 so Iowa's first known school would be remembered as an important part of the state's history.

— *Sherri Dagel*

Daughters of the American Revolution — women's group that preserves American history

SEPARATE SCHOOLS: Education for African Americans

Imagine you are a boy in a classroom full of girls, or that you're the only girl in a class of boys. African-American students in the Territory of Iowa experienced such situations. They were often one of few African-American children in Iowa's schools.

Although a general school law was passed in 1839 to open schools in each county, only European-American children were allowed to attend. In 1847, schools became free for all European-American students. Taxes paid for teachers and the upkeep of schools. Although they were legally excluded from local

For most Iowa kids, walking into an Amish one-room schoolhouse would be like crossing time's threshold and stepping back into the days of great-grandparents.

But for Amish children, one-room schoolhouses are not a curiosity of the past. They are an important part of their everyday lives.

The Amish are descendants of Swiss and German Protestants who were punished for their religious belie in sixteenth-century Europe. They can to the new world in 1728 to pursue the faith and simple way of life.

Today, most Amish people live on farms in the United States and Canad In Iowa, Amish communities can be found near Bloomfield, Kalona, Hazleton, and Jesup. Their culture encourages simplicity. They farm with

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Art by Mary Moye-Rowley

schools, African-Americans were still expected to pay school taxes.

Some communities ignored the 1839 law and allowed African-American children to attend their schools. "In an area where there were very few African-Americans, people would have objected less," Arnold Cooper, a professor of education at Lincoln University in Missouri, told *The Goldfinch*. "It's possible that they were known to the local people and accepted."

Cooper said that 1850 Iowa census records show that despite the law preventing African-American children from going to school, at least seventeen of 122 African-American school-age children went to school in six counties. Some were educated in the home of Quakers, who spoke out against laws that kept most African-Americans out of Iowa's schools.

In 1858, a law was passed providing for separate schools for African-American children. By 1860, 118 African-American students were attending schools in fourteen counties.

One such school in Des Moines opened in the early-1860s. The school was later moved to the basement of the Burns United Methodist Episcopal Church where schoolchildren were taught by Miss Chitton, Mr. Harris, Mr. Mills, Mr. DePew, and Mr. Hays.

In 1867, twelve-year-old Susan Clark of Muscatine was denied admission to a Muscatine public school because she was African American. Her father, prominent businessman Alexander Clark, sued the Muscatine school board. Susan won her case and the Supreme Court of Iowa decided that the local school board "cannot deny a youth admission to any particular school, because of . . . color, nationality, religion, or the like."

It wasn't until 1874 that all Iowa's schools desegregated. It would take more than seventy-five years for some states in the country to follow Iowa's lead.

— Amy Ruth

segregated — keeping one or more races of people separate

Amish Schools
Where Past Meets Present

their hands and horses and travel by horse and buggy. They want their communities to remain separate from non-Amish communities.

The Amish have their own schools where they teach their children the traditions and values of their culture. But an Amish child's education begins at home. Boys learn farming, and girls learn how to sew and cook. Formal education ends in the eighth grade. Amish teachers are often young girls who have not studied beyond that level themselves.

When one-room schools were still part of the public school system, Amish children often attended school with English kids. When many of Iowa's one-room schools closed, the Amish built their own schools.

In the 1960s, all Iowa's teachers had to become certified. The Amish refused to obey these laws because it would interfere with their way of life. When law-enforcement officials arrived at an Amish school and tried to force its children to go to public schools, frightened children hid in nearby cornfields.

Such conflicts led lawmakers to pass the "Amish exemption." This law allows Amish children to attend Amish schools and leave school after the eighth grade. In 1972, the United States Supreme Court ruled that states may not force Amish children to attend public schools.

Most Amish schools in Iowa still operate under the exemption law. These schools must get permission from the state to open their schools each year.

Two Iowa school districts found a different solution. For almost three decades, Jesup and Wapsie Valley school districts have provided licensed teachers, textbooks, and other supplies for six Amish schools, along with a curriculum tailored to their needs. These schools are open to all students, though few non-Amish attend.

— Millie K. Frese

census records — official population surveys

Quakers — religious group of peace

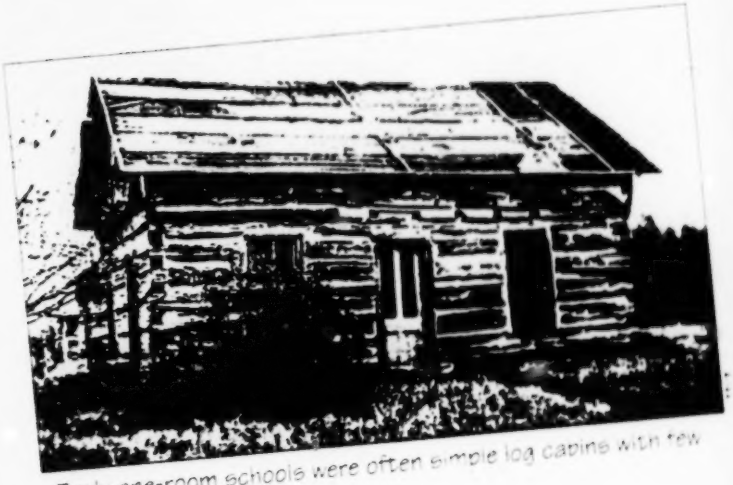
English — non-Amish

certified — officially trained

FLASHBACK

Remembering one-room schools

by Amy Ruth



Early one-room schools were often simple log cabins with few furnishings.

Pioneers who settled Iowa wanted to give their children a good life. They had traveled from the East to build new homes and grow crops on the wild, Iowa prairie. When settlers could support their families, they organized schools for their children.

Early schools: 1830-1858

At first, children learned at home from mothers and older sisters. When more families settled in an area, parents organized local schools called subscription schools. Children could attend these schools as long as their parents shared the expenses for supplies and teachers. In 1839 a law passed by the territorial legislature made each county responsible for opening and maintaining public schools. Some counties did open schools, but many children did not attend because their parents needed them on the farm. If there was spare time, mothers, aunts, and friends would do their best to teach children to read and write.

Most of Iowa's early schoolhouses were log cabins. Students sat on long wooden benches and worked on their lessons. When it came time for them to show what they had learned, they stood at the front of the room and **recited** what they had memorized. Blackboards were simple wooden boards painted black. White limestone was used instead of chalk, and erasers were

Some schools, like this one originally built near Davenport, had pot-bellied stoves to keep students warm in class. Many teachers relied on simple rules and punishments to keep students in line.

SHS

recite — repeat from memory

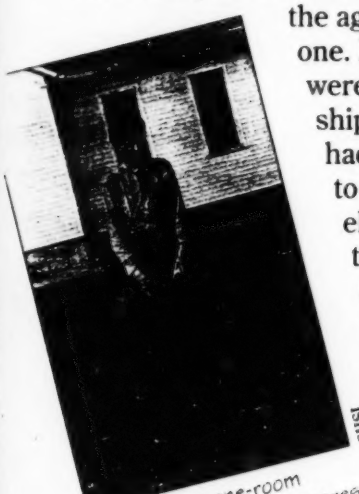
BEST COPY AVAILABLE

made out of sheepskin. Textbooks were rare, and many kids learned from the few books they brought from home. Paper and pens were expensive so kids wrote on slates.

To improve Iowa's small and unsupervised school system, the state legislature asked a famous educator, Horace Mann, to evaluate education in Iowa. In 1856, Mann told the legislature that all schools should be supported by school taxes. He also believed education should be available to all children, regardless of their race.

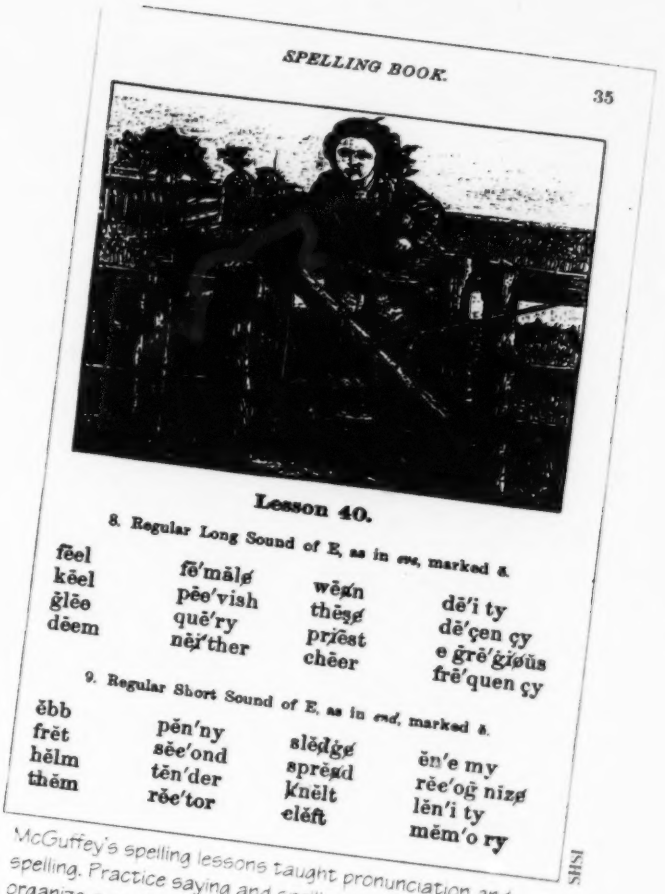
Township schools: 1858-1872

In 1858, another law was passed, and each **township** in Iowa became responsible for organizing schools. These new school districts built schools and provided tuition-free elementary education to all children between the ages of five and twenty-one. Nine schoolhouses were built in each township and students only had to walk a mile or two to school. Townships elected school boards to hire teachers, buy supplies, and set the school calendar. Most schools were open for three terms — fall, winter, and spring. Children did not legally have to attend school, and many kids, especially older boys, stayed home to help with farm chores.



Students in one-room schools shared daily chores. This boy empties stove ashes in his Page County schoolyard, about 1910.

ISHS



SPELLING BOOK. 35

Lesson 40.

8. Regular Long Sound of E, as in *eve*, marked ē.

fēel	fē'mālę	wēģn	dē'i ty
kēel	pēe'vish	thēsę	dē'çen çy
ģlēe	quē'ry	prīēst	e ģrē'ģiøŭs
dēem	nēī'ther	chēer	frē'quen çy

9. Regular Short Sound of E, as in *end*, marked ĕ.

ĕbb	pĕn'ny	slĕdģę	ĕn'e my
frĕt	sĕe'ond	sprĕad	rĕe'oğ nizę
hĕlm	tĕn'der	knĕlt	lĕn'i ty
thĕm	rĕe'tor	eĕft	mĕm'o ry

McGuffey's spelling lessons taught pronunciation and spelling. Practice saying and spelling these words and then organize a spelling bee with your friends!

ISHS

Some communities held school in private homes until a proper schoolhouse could be built. In 1870, the Lacey family organized a school in an upper room in their rural Palo Alto County home. Nine-year-old Etta May Lacey, her two brothers, and four other students sat on long wooden benches and learned from Mrs. Wilson, a teacher who lived with the Lacey family. Four years later, a permanent

township — small, organized community with a local government

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

SHSI

In 1934, this Maquoketa Township school still relied on outhouses and a water pump (next to the shed) for drinking water.

schoolhouse was built. The students had real desks, a blackboard, and a wood-burning stove. "It was our school, much the best we had ever had, and we were very proud of it," Etta May wrote in 1930.

Expanding communities, expanding schools

As Iowa's population grew, school districts could afford to build more schools. By the turn of the century, Iowa's rural population had grown quickly, and there were almost 14,000 one-room schoolhouses across the state. Many schoolhouses looked alike. They were built from wooden boards and then painted bright red, white, or sometimes yellow. Some schools were brick or stone. Students stored coats, boots, and lunches in the school entryway. Their desks stood in rows in the classroom. A wood-burning stove blazed in the winter. Students who were lucky enough to sit close to the stove kept toasty warm. Students in the back rows often shivered while they studied.

In the late 1800s and into the mid-1900s, many Iowa kids were using **standardized** textbooks. Some of the most popular were McGuffey's Readers. First published in 1836, these books taught kids reading, writing, spelling, public speaking, and history. William McGuffey's books also had strong morals — they taught students to stay away from tobacco and alcohol, respect their

SHSI

Rural students' eighth-grade graduation ceremonies were often held at the county seat. These nine eighth graders graduated in Sac County in 1913. Can you read the decorative banner strung above them?

standardized — used by everyone in the same group

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

elders, be patriotic, and have good manners. A **compulsory** education law was passed in 1902, and all children between the ages of seven and fourteen were required to attend school.

The new attendance law increased school enrollment significantly. To prepare for new students, wooden country schoolhouses were painted inside and out, furniture was updated, and teachers received higher salaries. Oil burning stoves were installed, maps were updated, library books were purchased, and paper and pencils replaced slates. When electricity found its way to Iowa's rural communities in the 1930s and 1940s, many schoolhouses were wired for electricity. Conditions improved, but country schools couldn't compete with urban schools that had more money and supplies.

One-room schoolhouses were still in operation into the 1960s. But Iowans said a sad farewell to rural one-room schools when they joined with high-school districts and closed their doors by 1967. Today, Iowa's proud education heritage is preserved in eighty-two one-room schoolhouse museums across the state. Visitors who are curious about wood-burning stoves, recitation benches, and McGuffey's Readers may visit these museums and glimpse Iowa's history.

Ask yourself

1. How did McGuffey's Readers make learning easier for both teachers and students in one-room schools?
2. What would it be like to study in the same room with kids half your age?

Schoolhouse Hangouts

Modern Iowa families, neighbors, and friends meet and mingle at community and recreation centers and during planned community events.

Rural Iowans in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had fewer choices for meeting areas. Instead of cruising down to the nearby rec center, they gathered at the local schoolhouse. Here they held community meetings, church services, and music concerts when school wasn't in session. The schoolhouse sometimes served as a voting center and even made room for local debating, literary, and music clubs.

Parents, neighbors, and friends also gathered together for fun, food, and festivities at the annual Christmas program and the end-of-school picnic. Students practiced and prepared for these occasions. They often performed short plays or skits, sang songs, and recited poems and essays. Their hard work was rewarded with a pot-luck meal.

Class picture day was also special. Students and the teacher, dressed in their best clothes, gathered proudly in front of their school or stood in front of the blackboard as a professional photographer took their picture. Parents, older brothers and sisters, and other relatives sometimes took the day off to watch. With all the excitement in the air on these special days, books and lessons were temporarily forgotten!

compulsory — required 12

Consolidating one-room schools

The movement to consolidate school districts was the beginning of the end for Iowa's one-room schools. Consolidation meant that all the school districts in certain areas would close their one-room schools and students would attend one centrally located school.

In 1895, Iowa had almost 14,000 one-room schools — the largest number in the nation. Many educators and politicians thought these schools were behind the times. They believed country kids would benefit from larger schools where there were more teachers, better equipment, and where kids learned with students all their own age.

But there were problems with consolidation. It required transportation to collect students from widespread farms and take them to school. Horse-drawn school buses, called hacks, moved slowly, and many parents didn't want their children to travel so far, leaving home before sun-up and returning after dark. On days when rain turned dirt roads into seas of mud, hacks couldn't risk getting stuck in the mud to pick up all rural students.

Gasoline-powered schoolbuses, like these from Mapello, convinced many rural parents to send their children to consolidated schools.

Rural parents believed students would receive less personal attention in the large classrooms of a consolidated school than they did in the one-room schoolhouse. Kids in one-room schools often went to school with their brothers and sisters, and they learned from each other, as well as the teacher. The rural schoolhouse was an extension of the family and the glue that held a community together. Parents didn't want that to change. "To lose the rural school meant that the rural neighborhood would disappear, too," David Reynolds, a geography professor at the University of Iowa, told *The Goldfinch*.

The State Superintendent of Schools argued that consolidated schools would put their students in grades. "This was the heyday of the view that kids could learn best by competing with others of similar ages," Reynolds said. "It was not a period where it was thought appropriate for young people to learn from bigger kids."

Consolidated school districts could afford to pay a good teacher the same salary a city

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

school offered and to hire music and art teachers. Students would have the proper education to go on to high school. This had not been the case with most eighth-grade graduates of one-room schoolhouses.

For some time, rural communities succeeded in keeping their one-room schools, and consolidation moved slowly in Iowa. In 1913, to encourage rural districts to consolidate, the state offered between $500 and $750 a year to any school that offered vocational and industrial courses. One-room schools were too small and poorly equipped to offer these classes, and the extra money went to the consolidated schools.

In 1919, the legislature passed a law ordering schools with fewer than ten students to close. By 1921, there were more than 400 consolidated schools compared to four in 1904.

The 1920s farm depression and the Great Depression stalled school consolidation for almost thirty years. After World War II the state government gave schools more money for rural school-bus transportation. Faster, gasoline-powered buses replaced horse-drawn hacks and more districts decided to consolidate.

In 1953, a new kind of consolidation began. Instead of consolidated districts, larger community districts were formed. Often these new districts combined two or more smaller consolidated districts. By the mid-1960s, Iowa had less than 1,000 school districts as compared to more than 4,000 ten years before.

In 1965, the legislature wrote the end of the story of the one-room rural school. It passed a law ordering all schools to become part of legal school districts with high schools and by July 1, 1967, most of Iowa's one-room schools were closed.

By that time, bright yellow, gasoline-powered buses had become a common sight on paved and graveled roads in rural Iowa, transporting children to and from their community schools.

Photo courtesy Leslie C. Swanson, Moline, Illinois.

Brush College near Burlington was one of Iowa's last one-room schools. The 117-year-old building held classes for the last time in 1966. The kids in this photograph were among the school's last students.

Ask Yourself

❶ Why did rural families want to keep their one-room schools?

❷ Why did some educators think larger schools were better?

Getting there

Feet, horses, buses, and more

Come on along!

Kids who attended one-room schools often walked or rode horses or ponies to school. Many kids traveled alone, but these 1930s Iowa schoolkids made the trek to school together.

SHSI

Kit Holt, an Iowa farm boy who lived in the early 1900s, happily remembers his early-morning trips to the local country school. Holt often fought with his younger sister about who would carry the sloshing pail of drinking water to the schoolhouse. He walked barefoot in early spring, carrying his worn-out shoes and socks in his hands as clay and mud squished between his toes.

Like Holt, many Iowa kids walked to and from their one-room country schools each day. The trip often began on dark roads before dawn and could be challenging and interesting. For many, it was a chance to explore Iowa's countryside.

Without modern alarm clocks, rural kids woke up early with the help of parents or the crow of the early-rising rooster. After warming their clothes on the kitchen stove, kids headed outside to do their morning chores — feeding chickens, collecting eggs, or milking cows. A large, warm breakfast of homemade goodies waited inside for the hungry, young scholars. Unlike today's on-the-go breakfasts of pop-tarts, sugared cereal, or juice boxes, many country school kids ate with their families before heading off to school.

After the 1840s, country schools were built so no child had to walk more than two miles to attend school. Many kids enjoyed their morning walks because they were free from chores, school work, and adults. Their only worry was getting to school before the teacher rang the bell shortly before 9 a.m., indicating classes were about to begin.

Some considered the walks an outdoor education. One country student collected stones, butterflies, and caterpillars in her lunch pail,

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

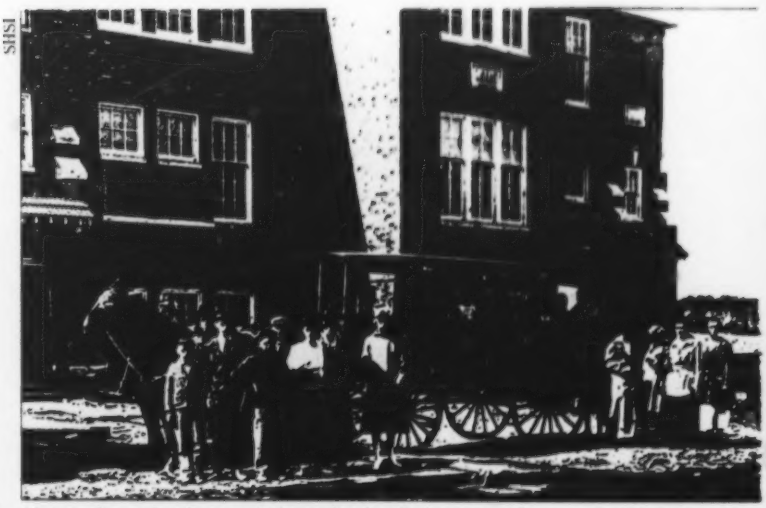
setting her treasures next to sandwiches, chunks of cake, hard-boiled eggs, and fresh fruit.

Before good roads were built, early trips to school were adventurous. Kids crossed fields, prairies, and pastures to get to school. Some climbed over fences and fallen trees. Others took off their shoes and socks to cross prairie streams and creeks.

The weather sometimes made the walk to school difficult and even dangerous. Dirt roads were too muddy to walk on during or after rain storms. During snow storms, kids huddled together for warmth until they reached school with frozen fingers, toes, and noses. Young children stayed home during harsh weather.

Some students rode horses to school, tying the animals up outside the schoolhouse or at a nearby farm until it was time to return home. When it was too cold to walk, a horse-drawn sled carried kids over ice and snow.

Few kids traveled to school in cars like many do today. Cars were an expensive luxury for many farm families. Country roads were often bumpy or muddy. Many areas had no roads. After 1910, cars were sometimes used in areas where roads were improved. After being started with a hand-crank, the car carried students to school traveling at speeds no greater than twenty-five miles per hour.


SHSI

Horse-drawn hacks carried rural schoolkids to and from consolidated schoo this school in Webster, Iowa, until the 1930s and 1940s.

When smaller rural schools combined, many students rode greater distances to the larger country schools. A horse-drawn wagon, called a hack, moved slowly carried and kids farther away from their homes.

In the 1930s and 1940s, hacks were replaced with yellow, motorized school buses that ran on fuel, not oats and hay. The faster buses traveled over improved roads to consolidated schools.

Buses, carrying kids faster and farther, are now common on paved roads and highways. But those who walked or rode horseback to rural schools still remember when the daily trip through the countryside was filled with challenge and adventure.

— Sherri Dagel

Ask yourself

❶ Try to imagine riding across country roads in a hack. What kind of ride would you have?

❷ How do you get to school? Could you ride a horse to school if you wanted to? Why or why not?

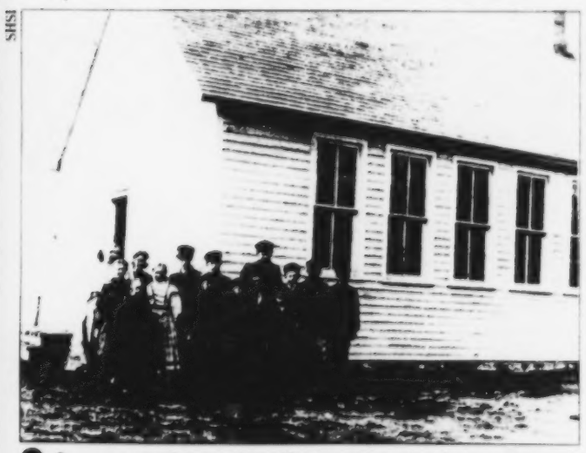
Peeking at Pictures

These photos are of pre-1920s Iowa students, teachers, and schools. That's one of the few hints we're going to give you! Study the photographs carefully and use what you already know about one-room schools to answer the questions under each photograph. Look closely at the students' clothes, surroundings, and the materials used to build the schools. How many students are in each picture? Can you spot the teachers? Turn to page 30 for the answers.

SHSI

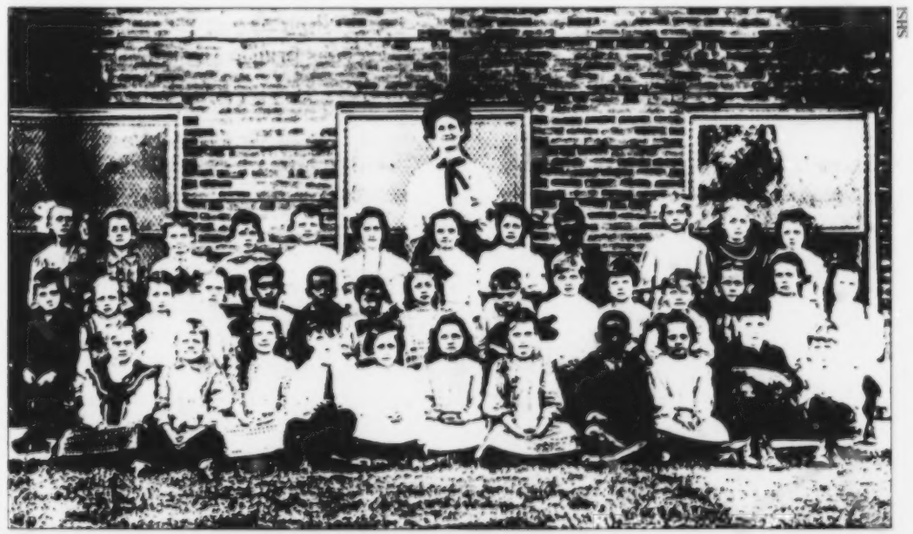
❶ This log cabin school looks as if it were patched together like a quilt! Do you think this building was more comfortable in winter or spring? Why?

SHSI

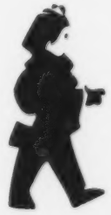


❷ Compare this schoolhouse to the log cabin school in #1. How are the schools different? How are they the same?

SHSI



❸ What clues in this picture tell you these kids attend a large, urban school?



HEY! Who's that goofy-looking kid?

Ask your relatives to show you their old school photos. What kinds of schools did they attend?

SHSI

❹ These kids are all dressed up and very serious. What are they up to?

SHSI

❺ These students attend a pretty sophisticated school for the early 1900s. What gives it away? (Hint: Look closely at the things in the classroom!)

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

One-room schoolteachers

Getting to know you

by Sherri Da

SHSI

Besides teaching and keeping order, one-room schoolteachers organized games and activities and sometimes even umpired recess baseball games.

One fall morning in 1922, not long before her eighteenth birthday, Dorothy Ressler stood nervously behind her desk in a tiny, one-room school. She had recently earned a teacher's certificate and accepted a job in Iowa County. Taking a deep breath, she tried to remember what she had learned. "It was challenging," Ressler told *The Goldfinch* seventy-two years later. "Every day I learned as much as my students did."

Teaching teachers

In the 1800s, anyone who knew a little about math and history and could read and write was allowed to teach. Many teachers with only an eighth-grade education taught students a few years younger than themselves. Most early teachers were men because it was believed only men could make kids follow rules. During the Civil War (1861 to 1865), when many men became soldiers, more women became teachers.

Slowly, laws were passed and teachers were better trained. Some earned teaching certificates at their high school or by **correspondence**.

In 1876 the Iowa State Teachers College opened in Cedar Falls, but it trained mostly urban teachers. In September 1876, twenty-seven students took teacher-training classes for three, six, or twelve weeks. Today, students earn their teaching degrees in four years and can attend the same school, now called the University of Northern Iowa.

The school day

The one-room schoolteacher's day often began before dawn. He or she walked to school or rode a horse that was kept at a neighbor's farm during the school day. In winter, teachers walked or rode in horse-drawn sleds through the snowy darkness.

Country school teachers had many responsibilities.

correspondence— through the mail

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

They were janitors who swept dusty floors and **disciplinarians** who punished bad behavior. They also umpired recess baseball games and tended scraped knees.

Teachers worked hard to make students follow rules and study their lessons. Students caught dipping girls' braids in **ink wells** or whispering were sent to a cold corner of the classroom. Some misbehaving students were punished with a hard ruler slapped across their hands. One teacher threw dusty erasers and chalk to wake up his sleepy students.

Some schools had only one student during each term. Others had nearly thirty. Rural kids did not legally have to attend school until 1902, and many didn't. Older farm boys often stayed home to help with the crops and only went to school in the winter.

A busy teacher relied on students' help to carry drinking and washing water to the school and to pass out and collect slates. Students also emptied ashes from the wood stove, swept the floor, or helped younger students with their lessons.

At the end of the day when the floor had been swept and mouse traps had been set, teachers went home to grade homework. Teachers were often paid with food, small salaries, or living quarters.

Rules for teachers

Teachers followed many rules. Some were not allowed to dance at social gatherings or be away from home in the evening. All teachers were expected to attend church and keep their schoolhouses clean. In Iowa's early years of education, women teachers were not allowed to marry — they were expected to prepare lessons, not raise families.

Slowly, teachers saw changes in their country schools. Electricity, running water, and indoor bathrooms were added to schoolhouses. Even with these improvements, many rural students traveled to larger schools. When all one-room school districts were ordered to consolidate with larger districts by July 1967, many country teachers joined their students in larger schools.

Many rural teachers agree that their days in the country school were challenging and rewarding. They taught thousands of Iowa kids to read, write, and appreciate education. Dorothy Ressler, who is now retired, still believes in the tradition of the one-room schools: "A good country school, I don't think you could beat it!"

SHSI

The noon meal gave students and teachers a much-needed break. If the weather was nice, they might eat outside. This 1909 class shared a meal inside with their teacher.

Ask yourself

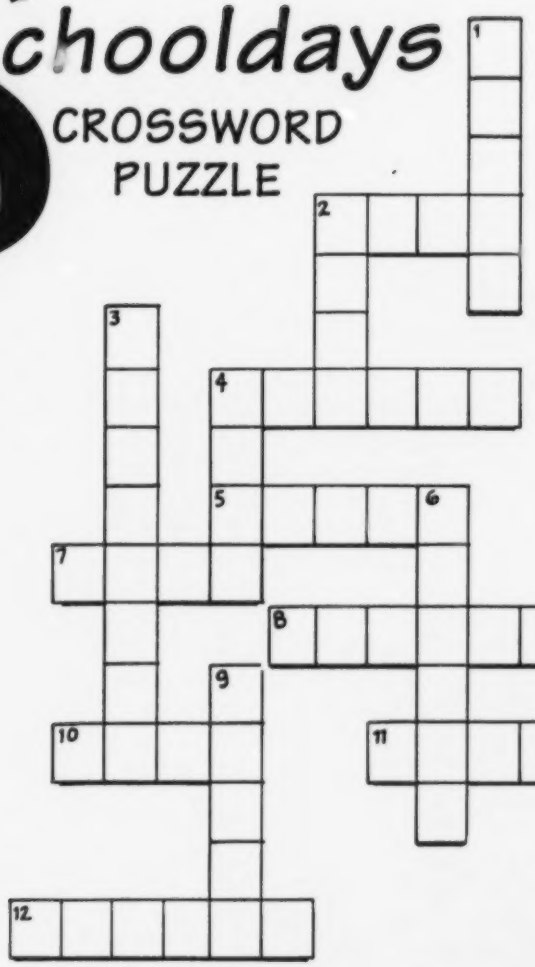
❶ What did one-room schoolteachers in the 1900s do *before* school, *during* school, and *after* school?

disciplinarian — person who makes and enforces rules

ink well — container of ink built into desk

P.I. 20

Schooldays CROSSWORD PUZZLE

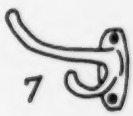


Across

2

4

5



7

8

10

12

11

Down

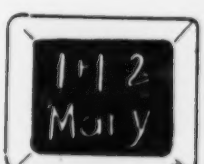
1

2

3

4

6



9

Art by Mary Moye-Rowley

Solve this puzzle using what you've learned in this issue of "The Goldfinch." The pictures are your clues. All the clues could be found in or near a one-room schoolhouse at the turn of the century. (Hint: all the words have been used and explained between pages 1 and 32.)

Answers on page 30.

A School Day to Remember

by Amy Ruth

"History, money, school," eleven-year-old Lee Bailey muttered to herself. "Hmmm." She sat cross-legged on a window seat in her family's rural home as the dark Iowa morning began to wake up.

Although it was late September, the air was sticky and hot, and Lee couldn't sleep. The cows were also wide awake. Lee heard them mooing in the barn. She crawled down from the window seat and wandered outside to milk them.

"I've got to come up with an idea for my Fundraising Day booth," she said aloud as she made her way to the barn. "I'll never help buy a new flag for the school if my imagination keeps shutting off like this."

She pushed open the barn door and was surprised to see Great-Grandma Martha. "Granny!" Lee said, startled, "what are you doing up so early?"

Granny picked up a bucket and walked over to the cows who were so happy to see her they swished their tails in greeting. "I should ask you the same thing, Lee. A growing girl needs her sleep, you know. I've had more than my share in the last 85 years."

Lee sank into a pile of hay and watched Granny's hands move up and down, filling the bucket with warm milk. Lee's family didn't farm for a living, but Granny preferred fresh milk so she kept two cows in the barn.

"What's the trouble, dear?" Granny asked over her shoulder.

Art by Mary Moye-Rowley

"I don't know what to do for my fundraising booth at school," she answered, digging herself deeper into the hay. "My social studies teacher, Ms. Purnell, said it'll give us a chance to explore history, politics, or art. Plus we'll raise money for a new flag."

Granny thought for a moment. "You need to do something ordinary, but with a twist," she said with a smile. "Like a memory booth."

"A what?"

"You know," said Granny, sliding over to a restless Mabel, "like a kissing booth. People give a dollar, but instead of a kiss, they get a memory — a story from the olden days."

Lee nodded silently, her eyes and imagination flashing. "That would work, Granny, but what'll we do about memories?"

"We'll use my memories," replied Granny. "I was a country teacher back in the 1920s and 1930s. Spent two years teaching down the road at the Center School. I was only eighteen when I started there in 1927. I could spin many a tale about those days!"

"Oh, Granny! What a cool idea! There's only one catch — Fundraising Day is Monday."

Granny laughed as she stood up and started back to the house. "That's okay little Lee. I've had plenty of things sneak up on me in my time," she said, pulling the barn door closed behind them. "By Monday morning, I'll churn out stories like my mamma used to churn out butter."

On Monday, Lee introduced all the stories with a history of Granny's life and passed around photographs of Granny as a young teacher. Parents, teachers, and students gathered around Lee's booth and paid a dollar to hear Great-Grandma Martha's stories — like the time a spring tornado almost blew away the Center School during Granny's first year of teaching.

"It was an ordinary spring day," began Granny from behind the booth. "After a long morning of recitation my students were restless, and I let them out a bit early for recess. They scampered down the schoolhouse steps to play **Fox and Geese** in the schoolyard. I sat at my desk and graded homework assignments. Not ten minutes into recess, rain began pouring from the sky. It was as if someone was emptying a giant pitcher of water onto the schoolhouse. . . ."

"Hurry, children," eighteen-year-old Martha yelled over the howling wind. "Hurry before the rain gets you!" Martha watched the rolling clouds above her as the students scampered into the dry schoolhouse.

"Children," she told them in a stern voice, "take off your wet shoes and wraps here in the entryway. Then choose books from the library shelf and read quietly at your seats. Ben," she concluded, beckoning to twelve-year-old Benjamin Martin, the oldest student, "you come with me."

The children did as they were told, happy to be excused from arithmetic and geography lessons. Martha and Ben went back outside where the wind snapped treetops like they were toothpicks.

"Is everything all right, Miss Reed?" Ben asked.

Fox and Geese — chase-and-tag game popular at country schools

"I'm not sure, Ben." replied Martha as she wrapped her sweater tightly around her. "There's an awful storm coming. See those clouds?" she said, pointing to dark clouds moving across the sky. "They look like the beginning of a tornado."

Ben knew how dangerous tornadoes were. If he was at home he'd rush to the cellar with his family. But there was no cellar in the schoolhouse and the closest farm was almost two miles away. "What are we going to do?" he asked, trying to keep his voice from shaking.

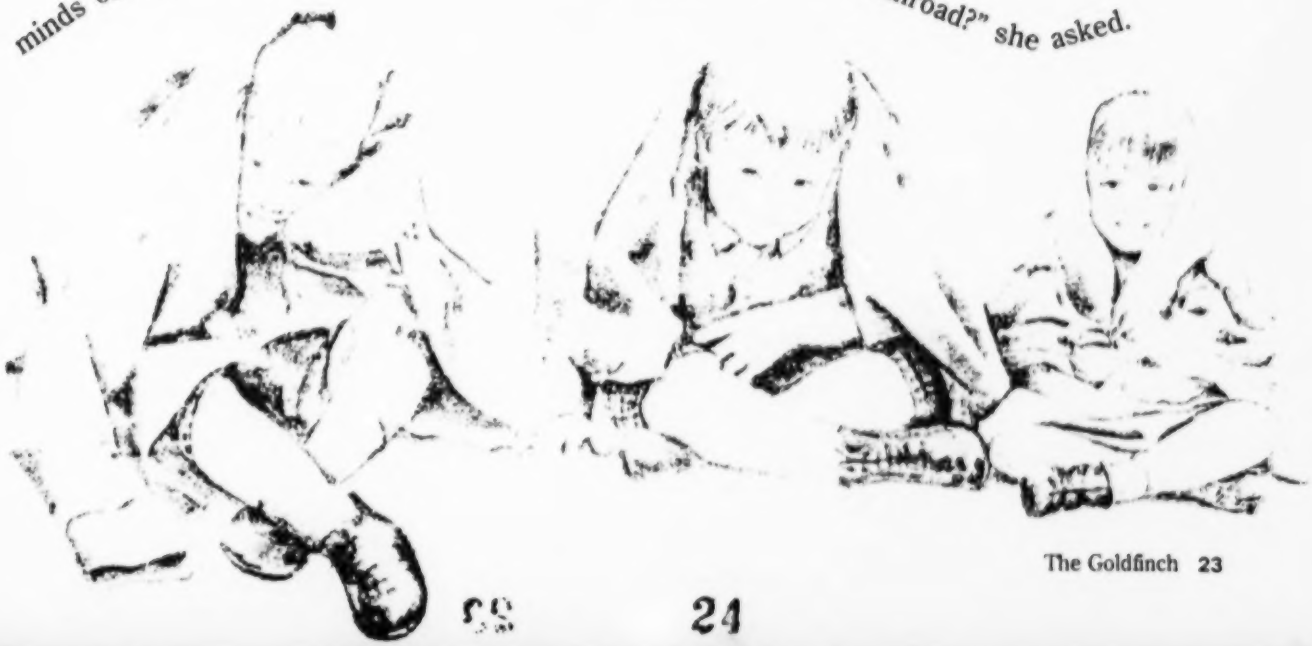
"That's what I wanted to speak to you about, away from the other children," Martha said. "They'll be scared if a tornado hits. I need your help to keep them calm. We'll go back inside and you'll all sit under your desks. I'll think of a game to keep their minds off the storm."

The two went back into the schoolhouse and bolted the door behind them. Ben took his seat at the back of the room and Martha did her best to appear cheerful.

"Children," she said enthusiastically, "how about a game?" Cheers of agreement rang out in the schoolroom. "Let's pretend we're pioneers who settled Iowa more than seventy-five years ago. The desks will be our wagons. We've finished driving for the day, and it's time to settle in for the evening. At the count of three, everyone under your desks! One! Two! Three!"

In three seconds, the children had settled in. "Good," Martha said. "Now, how about a song?"

Eight-year-old Melissa Reece stuck her hand out from under her desk in the center row. "What about I've Been Working on the Railroad?" she asked.



"A fine song," agreed Martha, and started to sing, "I've been working on the railroad, all the live-long day, I've been working on the railroad just to pass the time away. . . ." The children jumped in, their voices drowning out the raging winds.

While they were singing, Martha gathered up the children's damp jackets, coats, and sweaters. "Oh, no!" she exclaimed passing out the wraps. "It's started to rain on the prairie. You'll need to cover yourselves." The children wrapped themselves in their pretend blankets and finished singing.

"I don't know about you," continued Martha from the platform at the head of the schoolroom, "but I think after a long drive, I'd be hungry. Let's rummage through our food supplies and see what there is to eat. Anyone find anything?"

"I did, I did," yelled six-year-old Charles Macintosh from his desk in the front row, "Flapjacks!" The children laughed. "With maple syrup!" he added. "No! No!" yelled an older boy from the back of the room. "Pioneers ate beef jerky and biscuits. When they ran out of food, they ate grasshoppers!"

"Ugh! Oooh!" squealed the younger children, horrified at the thought of eating insects.

Without warning the howling wind swirled furiously around the tiny schoolhouse and touched down under the east windows. The children stopped talking and listened closely. "Tornado!" someone yelled.

"Everyone bury your faces in your coats and stay under your desks!" yelled Martha, her voice straining to be heard above the wind. "Don't look up!"

As they huddled under their desks, windows started breaking and glass blew into the schoolroom.

Martha ran to an empty seat in the middle row, stretching her sweater over her head to protect her face. "It's going to be all right, children!" she shouted, ducking under the desk. "Just stay put!"

From the back of the room, Ben's voice yelled out, "Everybody sing. . . . I've been working on the railroad all the live long day. . . . " The frightened children sang as glass, books, and pencils flew across the room. In the entryway, the wind tossed lunch pails into the air like they were nickels. Homework assignments flew around the front of the room, and the brand new maps banged against the blackboard.

A few moments later, the wind stopped, dropping the final books and pencils to the floor before blowing out the broken windows. "Stay where you are, children," commanded Martha, slowly raising her head, "it's not safe yet."

Glass fell from her dress and hair as she climbed out from under the desk and stood up. "I'm going to look outside," she said. "Nobody move."

Picking her way over broken glass, Martha walked to the entryway. Unbolting the door, she heard a loud knock. She opened the door to find a man, his clothes wrinkled by the wind and wet from the rain, standing on the steps and carrying a black leather bag.

He tipped his dripping hat. "Ma'am," he said politely. "I was just passing by as the storm struck. I took shelter in the ditch behind the school." He stepped into the schoolroom and whistled, a quick, sharp sound. "Looks like you could use a hand," he said, grabbing the broom from the corner. . . .

". . . And after he swept up the glass, he checked the children for cuts and bruises and found everyone fit as a fiddle," concluded Granny, as her listeners sighed in relief. "Then he helped straighten the schoolroom. When we finished, he disappeared as quickly as he had arrived."

That night after supper, Lee knocked quietly on Granny's bedroom door.

"Come in," Granny said softly.

Lee opened the door quietly and sat on the bed. "Thanks for today, Granny! Ms. Purnell says we made a lot of money — maybe enough for a new flag. You were awesome!"

Granny smiled from the pillows. "I suspect I was. But so were you. You helped keep my stories alive. Now a lot of people know what life could be like in a one-room country school."

Lee thought for a minute. "I never thought about it that way," she said as her imagination started churning again. "But you're right, Granny! I've got to write your stories down. And we'll make copies for Dad and Mom and the cousins and aunts, and. . . ."

Granny raised a tired hand. "Slow down! There's time for that tomorrow!"

Lee smiled in agreement and gave Granny a hug. "Good night," she said.

"Good night, little Lee," yawned Granny.

Lee paused at the bedroom door. "Granny, what happened to the man who helped you and your students in the tornado?"

Granny laughed gently. "He was the new general store clerk who was studying medicine. He was also your Great-Grandpa James."

"I thought so," replied Lee with a wink as she switched off the light and closed the door softly behind her.

Ask Yourself

1. Why did Granny play a game and sing during the storm?
2. What would you do if a tornado hit your school?

WHO'S WHO

by Millie K. Frese

THREE CHEERS FOR THOSE WHO MADE A DIFFERENCE IN IOWA'S COUNTRY SCHOOLS!

Name: Horace Mann
Lived: 1796-1859
Known to spend time in: Iowa, as the head of an education committee formed in 1856 by Governor James W. Grimes to study Iowa's schools.
Description: Often called the father of the American public school system. Once a lawyer, Mann devoted his life to improving education in his home state of Massachusetts and across the nation.
Known for: Developing a plan to provide all Iowa students with a free elementary education, creating school districts and a central school board, and helping pass laws to improve Iowa's public schools.
Once heard saying: "Be ashamed to die until you have won some victory for humanity."

Name: Rebecca Smith Pollard (also known as Kate Harrington)
Lived: 1831-1917
Description: Energetic teacher, writer, and poet who published her first novel when she was twenty-five. Pollard also wrote "The Pollard Series" spellers and readers used by many Iowa students.
Known to spend time in: Lee County.
Known for: Fun and creative approaches to learning. Her history lessons included playground reenactments of Revolutionary War battles. A pot of boiling mush illustrated an erupting volcano.
Once heard saying: "Offer a variety of topics to promote moral growth, patriotism, the cultivation of kindly feelings, and polite manners."

Name: Sarah Gillespie Huftalen
Lived: 1865-1955
Known to spend time in: Delaware and Page counties.
Description: Educator and county school superintendent. Huftalen taught math, science, grammar, history, and literature. She encouraged her students to transform their run-down schoolhouses into welcoming settings. Teachers and superintendents from across the nation visited her schools to observe her methods.
Known for: Her crusade to recognize the accomplishments of rural school teachers and students when one-room country schools were considered inferior.
Once heard saying: "We want to have the best school in the state. Nothing short of it will satisfy us."

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Playing in the Past

Bored? Restless? Nothing to do? When country school kids were fidgety and wanted to forget aggravating arithmetic or grammar lessons, they might have played a spirited round of Pom-Pom Pullaway in the school yard.

One person would be "IT." The other players would mark two saftey lines on either side of a wide running space. Everybody except IT lined up along one safety line. IT would stand in the middle, calling out the name of the players; "Johnny, Pom-Pom Pullaway! Come away or I'll pull you away!" Johnny would run to the opposite safety line while IT tried to tag him. If Johnny was tagged, he helped IT catch other players. The game continued until the last free player was tagged. That player became IT for the next round.

Kids today may not play Pom-Pom Pullaway, but some of their games have survived in bits and pieces from the turn of the century.

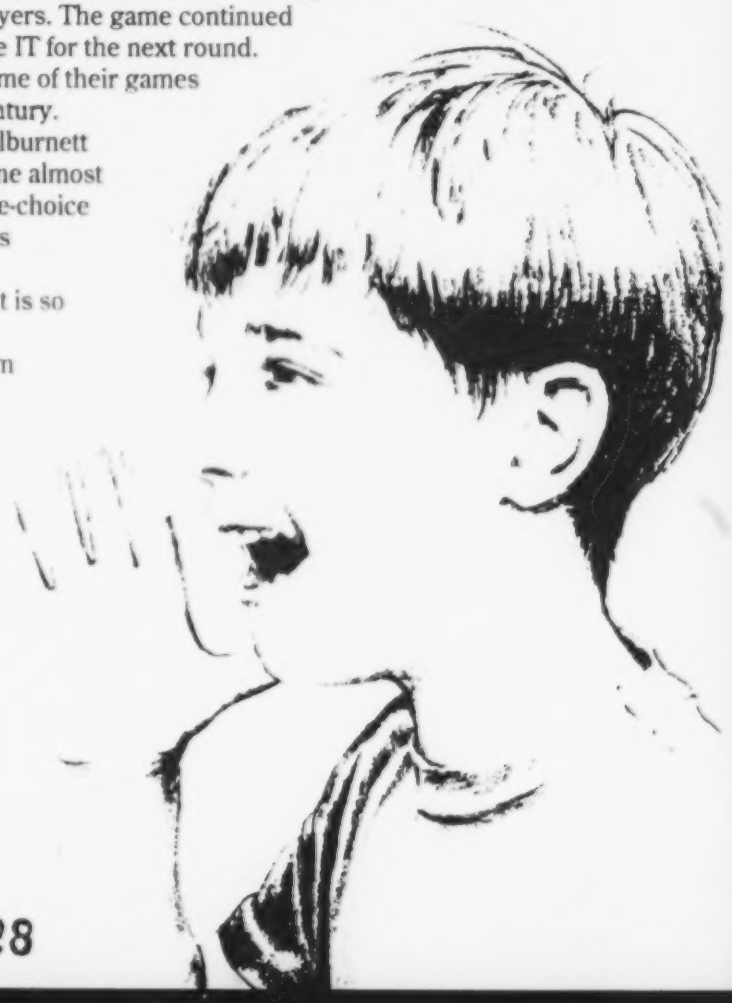
Jennifer Flannagan and other sixth-graders at the Alburnett Elementary School in Linn County play "Hill-Dill," a game almost identical to Pom-Pom Pullaway. "Whenever we get a free-choice day in gym class, we always choose Hill-Dill because it is absolutely the best game ever," Jennifer said.

Alburnett's gym teacher, Diana Faulkner, agrees: "It is so simple to play and everyone gets the chance to run."

To play Hill-Dill, follow the instructions for Pom-Pom Pullaway, but call out "Hill, dill, come over the hill, if you're wearing _____." Fill in the blank with the color of clothing or other feature, like eyeglasses or a sweatshirt. The rest of the game is played just like Pom-Pom Pullaway.

Get a bunch of friends together and try both games at home and at school. Remember, Iowa schoolchildren have played Pom-Pom Pullaway or variations for more than a hundred years. Maybe your parents, grandparents or other relatives played it when they were little. If you ask them, they might even join in the fun!

— Colleen A. Kemps



Art by Mary Moye-Rowley

Learning the old-fashioned way

A fire crackled in the wood-burning stove, nibbling away at the chill of a rainy, April 1994 morning. Mistress Hansen, the **schoolmarm**, tugged on a rope attached to the schoolhouse bell on the roof. The chimes brought students scrambling toward the schoolhouse and up the muddy path — a path that took them back almost 120 years during their visit to Urbandale's Living History Farms.

"It is April 12, 1875," Mistress Hansen announced. "Boys in one line, girls in another.

"Ulysses S. Grant is our president," she continued in a stern voice. "Cyrus C. Carpenter is Iowa's governor, and there are thirty-seven states in the nation."

Thirteen fifth and sixth graders from Sister Justine Denning's class at St. Mary's Catholic School in Centerville followed in two lines behind Mistress Hansen. They walked through an entryway lined with pegs for coats and caps, and into their classroom for the day — Living History Farm's one-room schoolhouse.

Feet shuffled across wooden floorboards as boys moved toward desks on the left side of the room, and girls took their places on the right.

"There are three rules for conduct in my classroom," Mistress Hansen said. "Sit up straight. Be quiet. Stand to recite." In 1875, there were stiff penalties for misbehavior. Some schools were so strict, they didn't allow students to smile.

"In 1875, children brought their own books to school," said Mistress Hansen.

Before settling into their studies, students stood and faced the flag. Mistress Hansen led the class in a verse of "My Country 'Tis of Thee" and then directed them to their studies.

First, they practiced penmanship.

"Pupils were not allowed to be left-handed in 1875," Mistress Hansen cautioned. "A child's left hand might be tied behind his or her back or slapped with the **ferule** if caught

schoolmarm — old-fashioned name for unmarried, female schoolteacher

ferule — flat piece of wood used for punishment

using it during penmanship."

The room fell silent, except for the faint clicking of slate pencils.

Although paper was available in 1875, Mistress Hansen explained, it was very expensive. Only perfect work was copied from slates to paper.

The next subject in the Centerville students' school day was Elocution and Articulation.

"It means how well you talk," Mistress Hansen explained. With **McGuffey's Readers** in hand, students took turns standing to recite.

"Reading skills were very important because there were no movies, TVs, or radios in homes," Mistress Hansen explained.

The Centerville students also tackled arithmetic — 1875-style! Story problems challenged them to develop math skills necessary for everyday life.

"Ladies, at home you help feed chickens and collect eggs," Mistress Hansen began. "Today, you have two dozen eggs to sell to the local store at twelve cents a dozen. You also have three pounds of butter to sell at three cents a pound. Your mother wants you to buy five pounds of sugar, which costs ten cents more. How much will you have left?

"Gentleman," she continued, "you help your fathers in stores or out in the fields. You must be able to figure out how much seed to buy, how to sell crops or livestock."

Students solved the rest of Mistress Hansen's story problems. At recess they played Hide the Thimble, a rainy-day game where one student hid the thimble somewhere in the classroom, then watched as the others hunted for it.

Geography lessons, an Iowa history quiz, and a spelling bee followed recess. All too soon, 1994 crept back into the schoolhouse and Sister Denning's class returned to the twentieth century.

Paper and books are readily available in schools today — along with computers and other gadgets that pupils in 1875 never imagined. American schools today have more than one classroom, and each grade has its own teacher.

Despite these differences, eleven-year-old John Maletta didn't think the work in 1875 was more difficult. He's used to tough assignments.

"Sister Denning works us hard!" he said.

Perhaps some things never change.

30

McGuffey's Readers —1800s and early 1900s textbooks

What Next?

Iowa has eighty-two one-room schoolhouse museums where yesterday's schoolchildren might have studied on cold wooden benches, shared a water dipper, or played a mean game of Pom-Pom Pullaway. To learn more about Iowa's one-room schoolhouse heritage, visit a museum in your area. Here are some suggestions:

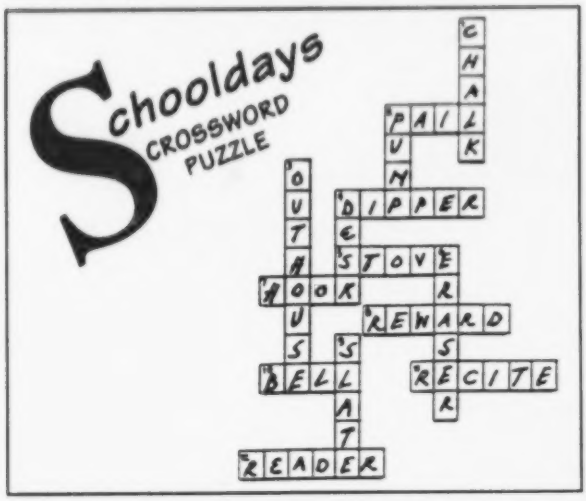
- Sheldall School Replica, Living History Farms, Urbandale, 515-278-2400
- Abbe Creek School Museum, Marion, 319-398-3505
- "R" Little Red School, Cedar Falls, 319-266-5149
- Little Yellow Schoolhouse, Allison, 319-267-2526

OR, READ MORE ABOUT ONE-ROOM SCHOOLS:

- "The Goldfinch," Volume 2, No. 4, April 1985
- "A One-Room School," Bobbie Kalman, Crabtree Publishing Co., 1994

Answers

PAGE 20 (SCHOOLDAYS CROSSWORD):



PAGES 16-17 (PEEKING AT PICTURES):

❶ This school would have been more comfortable in the spring. In the winter, bitter winds blew through cracks between the logs.

❷ Both schools have one room and are made from wood. However, the school in picture #2 is better built, has more windows and a chimney.

❸ This school building is brick; most one-room schoolhouses were wooden. Also, the kids in the picture look about the same age; kids in a one-room school would have been all different ages.

❹ The sixth-year reading class recited for their teacher before being promoted to the seventh year reading class in May, 1909.

❺ These lucky students have a piano, lots of pictures on the walls, and even a little stage for performing school plays.

BACK COVER (HISTORY MYSTERY):

The Ernst and Bruening twins are the only four boys sitting in the front row.

The Roost

I TELL YOU, GREAT GRANNY ROSE, SCHOOL TODAY MUST BE HARDER THAN IT WAS IN YOUR DAY.
HARDER?! ROSIE, IN 1900, I HAD TO WALK TWO MILES TO GET TO SCHOOL, RAIN OR SHINE!
WE HAD TO BURN COAL IN A STOVE TO STAY WARM IN THE WINTER!
MATH WAS DONE WITHOUT CALCULATORS!
WE HAD TO STAND UP IN FRONT OF THE CLASS TO RECITE LESSONS AND GIVE SPEECHES... EVERY DAY!
WE PUMPED OUR DRINKING WATER FROM A WELL!!
THE WORST PART WAS... THE OUTHOUSE!
THE OUTHOUSE?!
MAYBE MY SCHOOL ISN'T SO BAD AFTER ALL!
HA HA
JERRY BROWN

HISTORY MYSTERY

Ever had a case of the sibling blues? You might have if you attended a one-room country school. Brothers and sisters (even cousins!) spent their school-days together in the same classroom. Twins might have spent *eight* years together! Orleans #3 in Winneshiek County had three sets of twins in the 1920s and 1930s. Can you find the Ernst and Bruening twins in their 1929-1930 class picture? Turn to page 30 for the answers. Not pictured are the Perry twins — James and Bonny — who started at Orleans #3 in 1932.

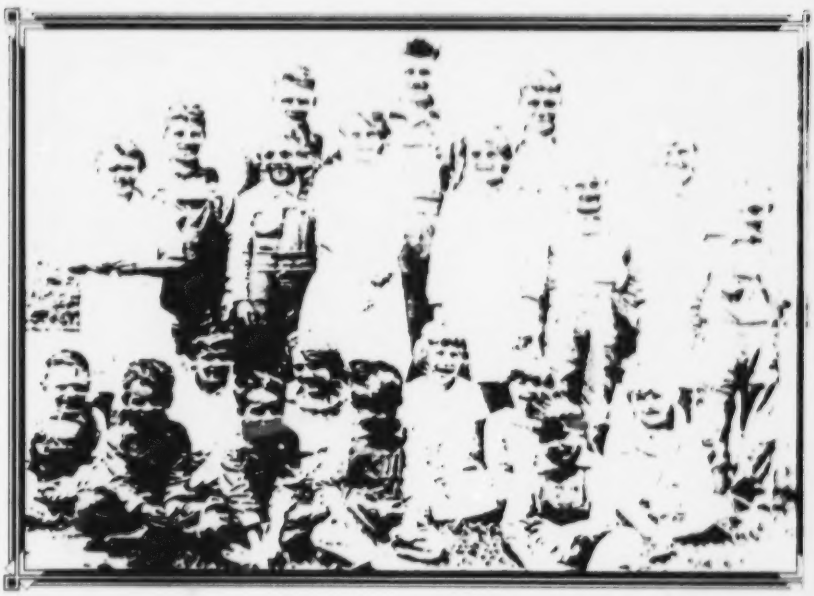


Photo courtesy Dawn Perry Sass Sayre, Decora

THE Goldfinch
US ISSN 0278-0208
State Historical Society of Iowa
402 Iowa Avenue
Iowa City, Iowa 52240-1806

Second-class postage paid
at Iowa City, Iowa

Social Studies Dev Center
2805 E. 10th St Suite 120
Indiana University IUB 120
BLOOMINGTON IN 47405

BEST COPY AVAILABLE